

UNITED STATES PATENT APPLICATION
FOR
METHOD OF FORMING A POLYSILICON LAYER COMPRISING
MICROCRYSTALLINE GRAINS
BY
TUUNG LUOH

FINNEGAN
HENDERSON
FARABOW
GARRETT &
DUNNER ^{LLP}

1300 I Street, NW
Washington, DC 20005
202.408.4000
Fax 202.408.4400
www.finnegan.com

DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

Field of the Invention

[001] The invention pertains in general to a method for fabricating a semiconductor device and, more particularly, to a method for forming a microcrystalline polysilicon layer in a semiconductor device.

Background of the Invention

[002] Polycrystalline silicon, also known as polysilicon, is generally deposited by thermal decomposition of silane (SiH_4) at a low pressure in a conventional semiconductor manufacturing process. A polysilicon layer is commonly used in the formation of a memory device, such as a flash memory device. In a flash memory device, a polysilicon layer may be provided for the formation of the floating gate and/or the control gate.

[003] One popular conventional technique of providing a polysilicon layer is low pressure chemical vapor deposition ("LPCVD") because of its lower cost, higher production throughput, and superior film properties. Polysilicon is deposited at around 620°C . Alternatively, amorphous silicon may be deposited at a lower temperature, for example, 560°C . The amorphous silicon may then be transformed into polysilicon through annealing. However, the annealing process often produces a polysilicon layer with large grain boundaries, which may cause electron trapping at the polysilicon/gate oxide interface, and adversely affect the operations of the memory device. The cause of electron trapping is illustrated in Figure 1.

[004] Figure 1 is a cross-sectional view of prior art semiconductor device. Referring to Figure 1, a gate oxide 12 is formed on a substrate 10. A polycrystalline

silicon film 14 provided through the LPCVD process is formed over gate oxide 12. As is known, polycrystalline silicon film 14 is made up of silicon crystallines separated by grain boundaries 16. One of the problems associated with the deposition of a polycrystalline silicon film is the formation of undesirable oxide valleys 18 at the interface between gate oxide 12 and polycrystalline silicon film 14. Valleys 18 may cause unintended trapping of electrons, particularly during erase operations, and causes non-uniform performance of the flash memory cell.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[005] In accordance with the invention, there is provided a method of forming a polysilicon layer in a semiconductor device, including providing a substrate, forming an oxide layer over the substrate, depositing a first silicon layer over the oxide layer, wherein the first silicon layer comprises microcrystalline polysilicon, depositing an amorphous silicon layer over the first silicon layer, and annealing the amorphous silicon layer to form a polysilicon layer.

[006] Also in accordance with the invention, there is provided a method of forming a flash memory cell, including providing a substrate, forming an oxide layer over the substrate, forming a polysilicon floating gate over the oxide layer including providing a bottom seed layer having microcrystalline polysilicon, providing an upper amorphous silicon layer over the bottom seed layer, and annealing the upper amorphous silicon layer, providing an inter-poly dielectric layer over the floating gate, and forming a polysilicon control gate over the inter-poly dielectric layer.

[007] Additional objects and advantages of the invention will be set forth in part in the description which follows, and in part will be obvious from the description,

or may be learned by practice of the invention. The objects and advantages of the invention will be realized and attained by means of the elements and combinations particularly pointed out in the appended claims.

[008] It is to be understood that both the foregoing general description and the following detailed description are exemplary and explanatory only and are not restrictive of the invention, as claimed.

[009] The accompanying drawings, which are incorporated in and constitute a part of this specification, illustrate one embodiment of the invention and together with the description, serve to explain the principles of the invention.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[010] Figure 1 is a cross-sectional view of a conventional poly gate structure;

[011] Figure 2 is a cross-sectional view of a method of manufacturing a semiconductor device consistent with one embodiment of the present invention; and

[012] Figure 3 is a cross-sectional view of a method of manufacturing a semiconductor device consistent with another embodiment of the present invention.

DESCRIPTION OF THE EMBODIMENTS

[013] Reference will now be made in detail to the present embodiments of the invention, examples of which are illustrated in the accompanying drawings.

Wherever possible, the same reference numbers will be used throughout the drawings to refer to the same or like parts.

[014] Figures 2 and 3 are cross-sectional views of semiconductor devices formed with a method consistent with an embodiment of the present invention.

Referring to Figure 2, a fabrication method of a semiconductor memory device 20 in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention begins by providing a substrate 22. Thereafter, a thin gate oxide layer 24 is formed over substrate 22. A first polysilicon layer 26 is then provided over gate oxide layer 24. First polysilicon layer 26 comprises microcrystalline polysilicon. In one embodiment, polysilicon layer 26 has a thickness of between about 50 to 2,000 angstroms. In addition, first polysilicon layer 26 may be provided through LPCVD in the presence of a reactive gas containing silicon and a carrier gas. The reactive gas containing silicon can be selected from the group consisting of SiH_4 , SiH_2Cl_2 , SiD_4 , SiD_2Cl_2 , SiDCl_3 , SiHCl_3 , SiD_3Cl , and SiH_3Cl with flow rate of about 20 sccm to 1,600 sccm. The carrier gas can be selected from the group consisting of H_2 , D_2 and D_3 with flow rate of about 100 sccm to 5,000 sccm.

[015] In one embodiment, first polysilicon layer 26 is formed by depositing a microcrystalline silicon layer over gate oxide layer 24 through LPCVD at a furnace temperature of about 500°C to 700°C , and a pressure between about 0.2 m torr and 5 torr, whereas a single wafer process is performed at a temperature of about 580°C to 800°C , and a pressure between about 150 torr and 500 torr. In another embodiment, first polysilicon layer 26 is formed through single wafer LPCVD at a chamber temperature of about 650°C to 750°C , and at a pressure of about 50 torr to 500 torr.

[016] Second polysilicon layer 28 is formed by depositing an amorphous silicon layer over first polysilicon layer 26. Amorphous silicon layer may be provided through any conventional method. The deposition of the amorphous silicon layer is

followed by an annealing process to form second polysilicon layer 28. In one embodiment, second polysilicon layer 28 has a thickness of about 100 to 2,000 angstroms.

[017] Due to the presence of first polysilicon layer 26, the grain size of second polysilicon layer 28 is more random and smaller than that formed by the conventional deposition processes. As a result, the combined first and second polysilicon layers 26 and 28 are easier to pattern and etch. In addition, by minimizing, or eliminating, the presence of valleys that cause electron trapping at the interface between the polysilicon layer and the gate oxide layer, the flash memory device formed with the method of the present invention exhibits a faster erase.

[018] Referring to Figure 3, the combined polysilicon layers 26 and 28 may be used as the floating gate in a flash memory device. A flash memory device 30 includes a substrate 32, an oxide layer 34 formed over substrate 32, and a polysilicon floating gate 40 formed over oxide layer 34. Floating gate 40 is formed through the two-step deposition process described above, wherein a bottom layer of microcrystalline silicon 36 is formed first, followed by the formation of an upper polysilicon layer 38 by first providing a layer of amorphous silicon and then annealing the layer of amorphous silicon. Memory cell 30 further includes an inter-poly dielectric layer 42 formed over floating gate 40 and a polysilicon control gate 44 formed over inter-poly dielectric layer 42. Inter-poly dielectric layer 42 may be a three-layered material, including a nitride layer sandwiched between two oxide layers, i.e., a so-called "ONO" type structure.

[019] Other embodiments of the invention will be apparent to those skilled in the art from consideration of the specification and practice of the invention disclosed herein. It is intended that the specification and examples be considered as exemplary only, with a true scope and spirit of the invention being indicated by the following claims.

FINNEGAN
HENDERSON
FARABOW
GARRETT &
DUNNER ^{LLP}

1300 I Street, NW
Washington, DC 20005
202.408.4000
Fax 202.408.4400
www.finnegan.com